

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems About New York - - - - -

Old King David Sings- - - - -

Poems by William Alexander Percy, George Dillon,
Harold Vinal and Others- - - - -

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Manhattan

AND what if they have gone, the towers of fame,
And Babylon and the singing tracery,
It is incredible that you shall die,
Though Nineveh be but a clattering name,
Though Tyre has fallen, and cities of stone and flame
Have lived and then not lived under a sky
Which is blue forever, and eternity
Grind them to rumor, you are not the same!

This energy has other source than theirs—
Cities capitulating under doom!
Ho, you shall use the tiny stars for stairs,
Climbing the sky to find you further room,
Planting within the indissoluble earth
The iron seeds of a fantastic birth.

Florence Kiper Frank

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Skyscrapers

NO one remembers
Why the straight leap of stone
Should be cool in his breast, like a fountain.
And no one remembers
Why towers of granite that part the blue noon
On flanks of shadow and silver
Should flame through his eyes like a girl's white body.
Not for any man's knowing, but surely,
The sky-rush of cities wakes festival
Under his heart.

Morning

THE sun touches the clean tapers of Manhattan,
And their thousand flames
Are the one blue fire of the day.
Cool towers shudder into light,
Stone blazes like wax in the still morning. . .
Something not this city burns and blinds.

Skyscrapers: Murky Morning

MINERS,
Stiff-shouldered, lank and sooty,
Come lumbering up from the pits of night—
Giant laborers
Stare at the sun's red flag of revolt,
Dark-breasted, dumb.

Flowers

SKYSCRAPERS, daisies of steel,
Forget-me-nots of granite,
O flowers of a breaking Spring—
Called by a sun beyond the day's sun,
Wet by a rain deeper than the earth's rain—
What eyes not our eyes hold you fair?

MacKnight Black

On Bones

ALL adamantine permanence
Is wrought of unearned indolence.
Still stones will sleep for evermore
But waves walk always to a shore.
Limbs leap in endless arrogance
At last, but the insentient bones
Stretch slow-relaxing skeletons:

Most undistressed of all that dies,
These settle in immune demise
Where no near cover can encumber
Save alien earth their rigid slumber,
For as the flesh unceasing flies
To nourish the relentless root
They sink in rest more resolute.

George H. Dillon

Before Sleep

BE to me, lover, what this rising moon
Is to earth's night of pain:
Dawn from these bitter hills too soon,
Cold-eyed, shall stare again;

Too soon shall all time's rediscovered scars
Show how this gift was earned,
To walk an hour silent among stars,
With heart upturned.

But now the radiance of your passion heals
The wounds young days deride,
Lifting to splendor every dread love feels
Of sleep by your white side.

William Foster Elliot

A Lullaby

ROCK you softly on my breast;
Time is ever creeping
To your eyes, my little babe,
Making wise their sleeping.

Rock you soft and rock you low,
Clover fields are gay with flower;
There's a swallow seeking rest
In this shadow hour.

If a stranger there should come
Tapping at our door;
Would you hear his silent tap. . .
Would I open to his rap?

What if I should steal from you
In the moon of night;
And your head no longer pressed
On the passion in my breast?

Rock you soft and rock you low
Seedling of a fancy lifted. . .
Bastard poppies come and go
In the warm wind sifted.

Rock you softly on my breast;
Time is ever creeping
To your eyes, my little babe,
Making wise their sleeping.

C. U.

Old King David Sings:

“WHERE is young David and where shall I follow him;
Full-grown his body as fruit on the tree,
Graceful his voice as the songs of the seraphim,
Where is young David. . . where is he?

Under the night wind and down where the sun has gone,
There he was going and there still he lies,
Drowsy with love and a dark girl from Lebanon,
Waking her lips and her tired eyes.

He lies behind me; I cannot go where he is,
Only the black rain and wolves come to me,
Follow me till I am dead with their sorceries. . .
Where is young David. . . where is he?”

Black Sheep

“BLACK sheep, black sheep, tell me where you’ve been.”
Out beyond the farthest hill where daisies touch the sky
And little ewes are plentiful and grass is new and green.
“But your flanks are torn and bloody and you haven’t told me why.”

“Black sheep, black sheep, tell me where you’ve been.”
Out beyond the sunset where a stream goes running by
And little ewes go bathing there to keep their bodies clean.
“But your sides are scarred and bleeding and you haven’t told me
why.”

"Black sheep, black sheep, tell me where you've been."
Out beyond the evening where the stars are all awry
And little ewes come down at night to wander ways unseen.
"But your eyes are blind with terror and you haven't told me why."

Decoration

HE is dead behind a screen,
Like a painted mandarin
In a toy pagoda built
Of tea roses touched with gilt,
Slowly steering
Out of hearing
Little China dogs that bark
In the silence after dark.

Horace Gregory

Two Sonnets

I

THOUGH in calm hours of silence on a hill
A man may dream of rootage down below,
And seek out furrows where the winds are still,
And darkness of the soil, and row on row
Of planted things, his brothers of the earth,
And think how spring shall give him with this whole
Generation equality of birth
And title to the homestead of his soul;
Yet he shall not find home so quickly won,
Nor incarnation thus a thing so tame,
Since he can call no date of time his own
Nor bear its perfect fruit while yet alive.
His soil shall be the dateless whence he came,
And death the only seed that shall arrive.

II

Fireflies over the fields, a dance of stars—
Oh too swift abiding for our slow eyes,
Eternities of light, our dull flesh bars
Your temples of perfection; paradise
Gateless, has vanished; Jerusalem, and all
The lovely cities laid away in heaven,
Mountains as clear as a blown bugle call,
The ranges of Platonic thought, have risen
Superbly remote—leaving you and night.
Fountain of meaning broken in the brain
Of the beholding questioner of light,
Shall the swift helter-skelter of your answers
Bring back the lost and beautiful again,
Reopen wide the doors, oh formless dancers?

Charles R. Murphy

Autumn

NOW fever spreads its webs in all the trees;
In yellowing meadows the lean kine browse,
Partaking the jaundiced weed, and the bees
Harvest the last of golden-rod and drowse;
Like a water-wheel when water's ended
Life cycles yet a while but sluggard-wise
And towards sleep and a quiet mill tended
By old men with lank webs upon their eyes.

I shall be wary, with eye alert and quick,
And nostrils stopped against the fever-wind
That spreads its tenuous weave of lethal breath
Across the sun's wide arc, clouding its wick,
And shall strive endlessly with caverned mind
Housing the web-gauze and the spider death.

A Strangeness Not of Promise

A STRANGENESS not of promise but of doom
Brews in this dusk on the dead pulp of leaves,
Assigning play to one vast lethal room
Wherein life's lonely puppet laughs and grieves,—
Grieves for that phantom exhaling the spring,
Ripening into June with a gesture wrought
Of honeyed calyxes where the wild bees cling;
Laughs for the surety of passion bought
Where was no passion but a langorous dream.
Does leaf mould keep the awakening of rain?
In dry fruitage is the blossom at seed?
Inexorable and fantastic the scheme
Spins its pageantry for a jester's brain,
Consuming philosophy with idiot greed.

Henri Faust

Payment in Full

SO much he wrested from this miser land :
A meadow plot, a square of furrowed loam,
And the forlorn, weed-cancered waste where stand
The rotting timbers that were once his home.
These, and a decade's harvests—wheat and hay
To feed his meager stock—not over much.
One stack remains, so black now with decay
Even the elk marauders will not touch.

Surely the drab years' toll, the grief, the ache
Of sleepless war with hail and drouth and blight
One might have deemed were fee enough to make
This trivial ledger entry read aright.
Not so; the usurer land does not relent.
It has his bones at last. It is content.

Ted Olson

Voyage

SO pass these hours. . . now the moon is set,
Now heavy apples fill the orchard place. . .
The schoolboy with his tenderness and fret,
The little sister with her holy face
Must linger suddenly where lanes are wet,
Sensing stranger rhythm, stranger grace.

And for this beauty with its careful moving,
This startling mood of sufferance and pain,
We trade the heart, its passion and its loving,
Its languid color and its low refrain. . .

So pass these hours. . . now the clock is turned,
Now stravling winds are come to winter's dead. . . .
The beggar with the pennies he has earned,
The harlot in her swiftly crumpled bed
Knew love and laughter—so the Old Ones said—
And dusty altars where their fires burned.

S. Bert Cooksley

Day-End

THE shadow lengthens in across the slope,
Leaving the tips of scrub still in the sun;
The cows are going home beneath the cope,
And the bright day is done.
When the leaf twirls a sidelong shadow flitters,
And full of shrilling life now is the grass;
The songs of birds have sunk to cries and twitters,
The cricket rings his little bell of glass.

Hearing all quiet sounds of evening round me,
Hearing the distant bellow of a steer,
I know though night once more has sought and found me
There is no need to fear.
And though I see the light has reached its bound,
And though I feel a darkening in the sun,
There is such depth of being in this ground
As makes all ending and beginning one.

Ellen

SHE had achieved a thorny continence
Like a locust tree in winter. When the spring,
Slow-mounting, picked the wards of every sense
And reached that locked-up heart and made it sting,
She gave it at the best but grudging room;
She knew well that the locust, when it yields,
Threshes its leaves by armfuls, hung with bloom
So thick the bees troop in from all the fields.

Abbie Huston Evans

Boy and the World

IN sunny orchards such as this,
Watching the silly sparrows wheel,
This boy may sit and hear the hiss
Of wind against his head and heel.

In adoration of a leaf
He may sit hours if he will,
And like the giddy flower-thief
Drink honey till he has his fill.

He hears the drone of wasp, the click
Of golden gateways in the brain,
Until the moon, a flaming wick,
Keeps him from his sleep again.

Negotiations With Earth

HE had no pact with cloud or moon,
He had no treaty from his birth
With anything from June to June
Except a spaded heap of earth.

His small estate could house a lark;
Behind the black hinge of a door,
An invalid against the dark,
He lies upon his dusty floor.

The singing throat is mute, and he
Sleeps in such long oblivion
That he forgets how eagerly
He raced his shadow with the sun.

Harold Vinal

Rose Tree of Assisi

AND you could bear to keep the thorns
Where no rose would ever grow,
Accept the power to wound and still
The blossoming forego?

It was a gentle saint whose blood
Set three rubies on your leaf;
Your swift retreating thorns had been
Clear witness to your grief.

And as the last white petals fell,
Was he not seen to stand,
Ready to strip you of your thorns
With kind, still-bleeding hand?

So that, denied the power to bloom,
No sharpness might remain
To torture precious flesh in which
You could not ease the pain.

It was a gentle saint, but you
Were loyal in the listening wind,
Accepting no release from thorns,
Heraldic of your kind.

And while the slanting rain of God
Pushes your blood-traced leaves apart,
No tears of mine fall to caress
The thorn-stripped rose tree in my heart.

Margaret Mead

Hawker's Song

WHO'LL buy a tear, who'll buy a tear,
Something to last you, something not dear?
Tears! Tears! Rainbow and salt,
Warranted brighter than gladness or fault!
Cheap! Cheap! Only a rose
And weeping is yours till eyelids close.
Only a kiss, and you may be sure
The break of your heart will never find cure.
The rose of your lips for the rose that is mine
And always your eyes will remember to shine.
Sorrow's the fashion, April's the wear:
Ladies, ladies, fresh tears and rare!

William Alexander Percy

Perplexity

CASSIOPEIA sits aloft
In her glittering chair;
Drifting soft across the night
Blows her streaming hair.

When her head leans drowsily,
How is she to know
Into which golden keyhole
Is her key to go?

Katharine Washburn Harding

The Measure * A Journal of Poetry

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Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, and Frank Ernest Hill.

Executive Secretary—Lindley Williams Hubbell.

Notes and Comments

UNUSUAL conditions in both business and editorial offices are responsible both for the delay in appearance, and the absence of notes on Contributors. The latter, however, range from poets well-known to those who prefer anonymity; from editors to anthropologists and legislators. There are sonnets from Massachusetts, Arkansas, and Wyoming; lyrics from Mississippi and Pago-Pago! Joseph Auslander, Lindley Williams Hubbell, and Rolfe Humphries are responsible for assembling this number.

Three poetry magazines are mentioned by Mr. Untermeyer in his newest preface as worthy the consideration of "any critic of the recent renaissance." These are, *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse*; *The Measure*, "which is to New York what Miss Monroe's monthly is to Chicago," and *The Fugitive*, published in Nashville.

A contest for the best sonnets on "Illusion" is announced by Mrs. William A. Bartlett, Vice-President of the Poetry Society of Great Britain and American editor of the *Poetry Review*. Three prizes aggregating \$50 have been offered for this contest by Mrs. Paul De Blois Loughton, of New York, as follows: First, \$25; second, \$15; third, \$10. The contest, open to all, will close December 15, 1925. Entries should be sent to Mrs. William A. Bartlett, 299 Park Avenue, New York City.

The Yale Series of Younger Poets

THE Yale Series of Younger Poets is open to writers of American citizenship, who are under thirty years of age and have not previously published a volume of verse.

Manuscripts for this competition are due May 1st and November 1st in each year. The best manuscript submitted in each competition is, if recommended by the Editor, published at the expense of the Yale University Press, the author receiving the usual 10% royalty on all copies sold in the United States.

The format of this Series calls for a volume of from fifty to seventy-five pages with but one sonnet or short poem to a page. A page of solid verse contains forty lines.

It is permissible to include poems previously published in periodicals or newspapers, if the consent of such journals is given for such republication.

An unsuccessful manuscript may be revised and resubmitted after one year has elapsed since it was first placed in competition.

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Contestants should address manuscripts and correspondence to the Editor, Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

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OF POETRY, PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT CORNWALL, N. Y., FOR OCTOBER 1, 1925.

State of New York, }
County of New York, } ss.

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Rolfe Humphries, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of The Measure, A Journal of Poetry, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publishers and Editors—Leonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Rolfe Humphries, George O'Neil, E. Merrill Root, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, all of 223 West 15th Street, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—None.

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2. That the owners are: Leonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Rolfe Humphries, George O'Neil, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, E. Merrill Root, all of 223 West 15th Street, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of September, 1925.

FRANK S. DAMATO, New York Co. Notary Public.

(My commission expires March 30th, 1927.)

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